NICHE
SUCCESS
BLUEPRINT

Tutorial

MODULE
EIGHTEEN

Niche Success Blueprint

"Start to Profit" Training Course

Module 18: Selling Advertising & Working With Site Sponsors

In Module 17 you created a Media Kit for your niche site which will help you attract advertisers, sponsors and brands that are interested in reaching your market with their offers.

This week we'll discuss various ways to "sell advertising" and enter into profitable relationships that *serve your market* and also give you an additional source of ongoing site revenue.

Brands, Sponsors & Advertisers NEED people like you that are consistently engaging their target market.

They are actively looking for market leaders (You!) to help them reach their market in fresh new ways.

There are many different types of "advertising" you can explore as an additional source of revenue for your site, but you should always keep your readers best interests in mind in the process.

Done right, the sponsors and advertisers you choose to work with will interest and engage your audience. They'll ENJOY and appreciate the offers - and even interact with your partners...

Selling Advertising Without Being A "Sellout"

From the start I've encouraged you to **train your visitors to "take action"** by offering them "the next best click" on each page or post you create (Module 7, Page 3).

Whether you invite them to follow you on a social channel, subscribe to your newsletter, or click on an affiliate link *(ie a specific product recommendation)*, a **call-to-action** should be both expected and appreciated by your readers. It also makes for an easier transition when placing ads on your site, or working with paid sponsors and brands.

> *Sellout: a person who compromises his or her personal values, integrity, talent, or the like, for money or personal advancement.*

About Lynn Terry

Best known for ClickNewz, Lynn works online full-time as a Professional Blogger and Super Affiliate. She has 17 years experience in a variety of online business models, and a passion for helping others achieve the same success & lifestyle.

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Your readership or audience, and your overall reach online, is your biggest asset in an internet-based business.

Your primary goal when choosing advertisers and sponsors is to bring even **more value** to your readers through these paid relationships. It's a great opportunity to introduce them to new products, services, companies or brands.

You can also bring them fun opportunities (like contests, drawings, giveaways, etc) - and even exclusive discounts.

Whether your advertising will *interest and engage* your audience, or *annoy them*, boils down to how you frame it for your readers - and how it is presented on your website.

> *Advertising says to people, 'Here's what we've got. Here's what it will do for you. Here's how to get it.'* **-**Leo Burnett

There are great products and great offers out there that your market will appreciate and *enjoy*, as you discovered through your Monetization Brainstorming in Modules 8 and 9.

You can reach out to companies and brands you feel are a good match for your readers, which we'll discuss in more detail (the how-to). But now that you have a Media Kit on your site, sponsors and advertisers will start *contacting you*. Keep in mind that you don't have to accept every offer. And you shouldn't. No amount of money is worth offending your readers, or compromising site usability or aesthetics - or your values and morals.

Determining Where To Place Ads On Your Site

By now you've likely been testing Google Adsense contextual advertising (which pays you for clicks) as well as various affiliate links on your niche site.

The most common ad placement is in the sidebar of your site, and in the content area. Ads typically convert best in the content area, such as in a blog post where you are talking about that product or topic specifically. A recommendation, review, or case study will always convert better than a randomly placed ad. *(Ex: Module 7, Pages 4-5)*

If you've been using Google Adsense, and testing/tracking the ad placement and ad types through channels as suggested, then you already have a good idea where ads perform best on your site - and what types of ads perform best, including text vs image and various ad sizes. If you haven't done this yet, it's a great idea. It not only tells you the "hot spots" on your site - but it also gives you statistical data you can share with potential advertisers, and use to determine pricing on various ad types & locations.
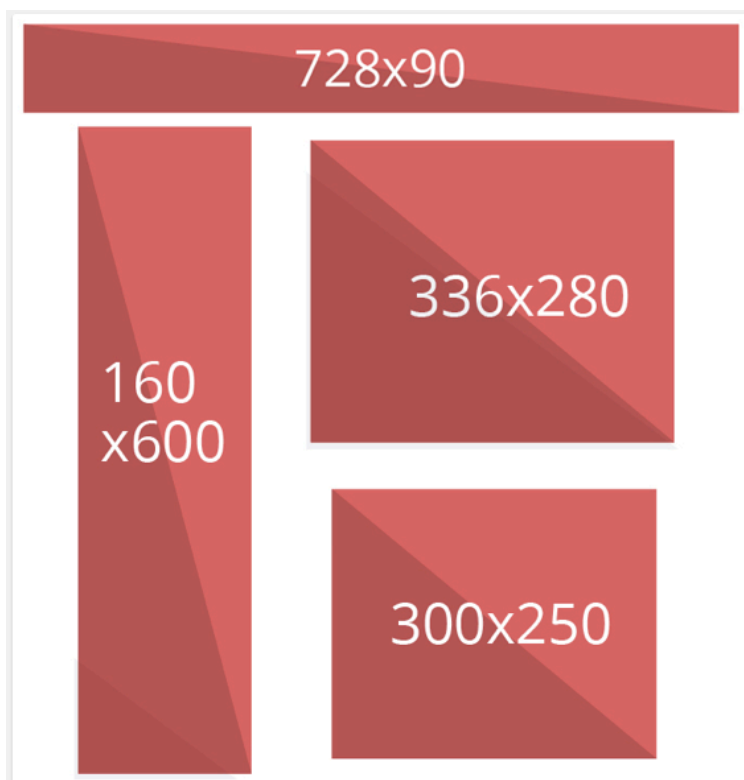
Google states that the ad sizes you see to the left are their highest performing Adsense units. -*(image source)*

To learn why these ad sizes perform better, and to see a live example of improved Adsense earnings on a niche site, watch this quick 2-minute video.

Whether you use Adsense or not, their data (from extensive testing & tracking) is a good starting point for you to test which ad types work best on your site.

While it's a good starting point for your own testing, you must test & track as your results may vary depending on your site layout and other variables...

Heat Map: Typical "Hot Spots" On Websites

Let's take a look at a traditional Heat Map (below, source: Google Adsense). What this shows you are the areas of a typical website that see the highest response rate, or the most clicks. As you can see, this heat map is based on a 3-column site layout:
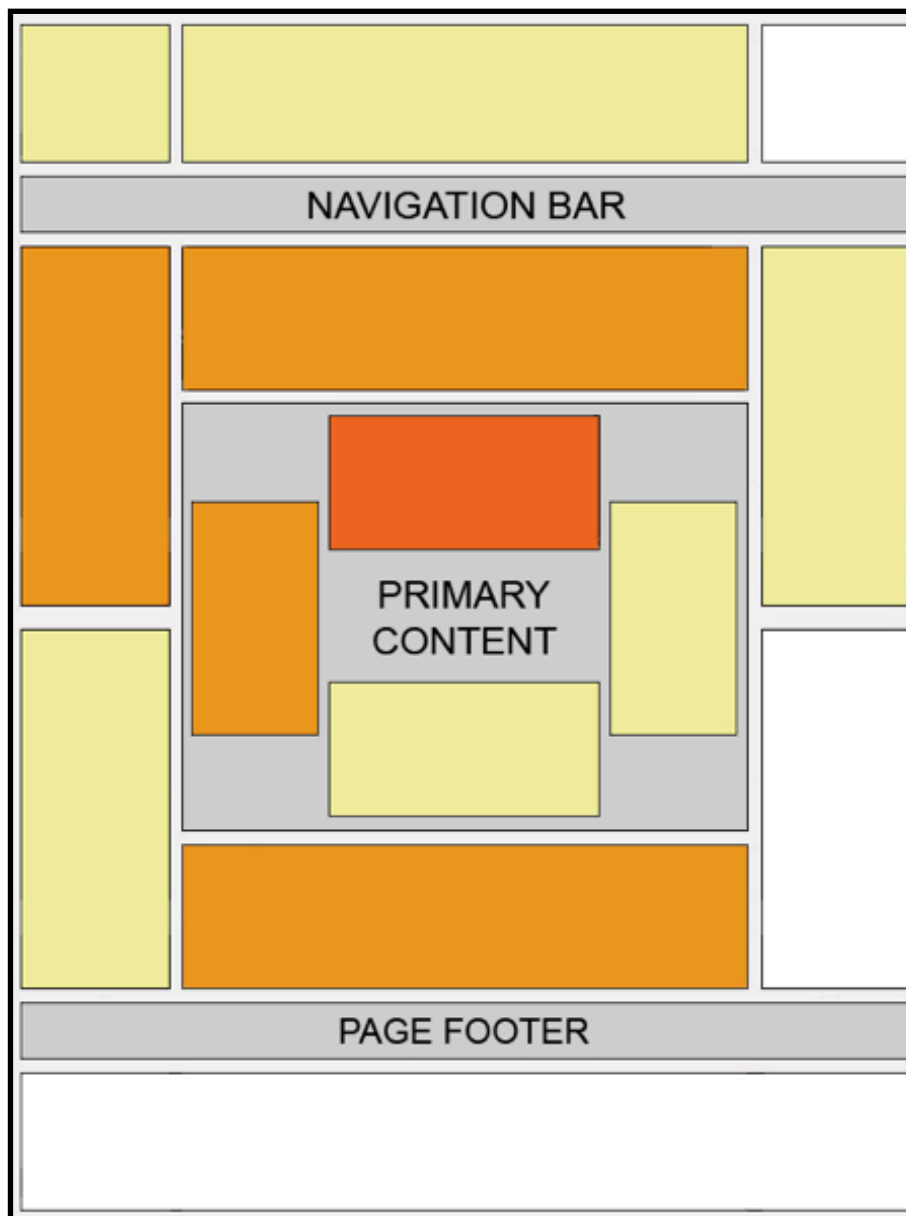
According to this heat map, the top left sidebar and the top / left / bottom of the main content area between the two sidebars, are the best performing areas on this layout.

Obviously your site layout may be different, and there are other variables at play that will determine which areas of your site that visitors are drawn to first, or most...

Using A Heat Map To Increase Your Revenue

Even if you don't use Google Adsense, or it's not a primary source of revenue, a Heat Map can still be invaluable for improving revenue and overall site growth. Maybe you want to increase email sign-ups or improve affiliate conversions, for example.

If you know where your visitors focus their attention when they land on your pages, you can easily place specific elements (such as an ad, an opt-in form, a special offer, etc) directly in front of them - in the places that will most likely get their attention and interest/engage them when they land your site.

Sometimes even the slightest changes to layout or placement, or even colors, can improve your conversion rate dramatically.

What if changing the location of your opt-in form automatically doubled the number of visitors that subscribe to your email newsletter? What if using a different ad format, or moving the ad to a different location, tripled your conversions? What if changing your site layout immediately improved your revenue?

That would definitely be worth testing, right? *Right!*

Adsense is a super easy way to test visitor response since you can just plug in the code, test different ad types and sizes and locations, and tap into detailed Adsense stats to track the performance of each test. Obviously Adsense is not the only, or even the best, method of monetizing your niche site, but it does make for a good (simple) testing tool.

As I mentioned earlier, Adsense also gives you statistics and advertising data you can share with potential advertisers. After testing & tracking, you can also simply replace those ad units with affiliate promotions to increase your revenue from that ad space.

The **placement** of site elements, and **the use of color**, are key factors in your overall site usability - which is what engages visitors and encourages them to take actions on your site. They are also the factors that determine your conversion rate - on everything from Adsense to email sign-ups to affiliate recommendations (ie Growth & Revenue).

Recommended: Website Heat Map & Color Psychology *(How To Easily Increase Your Revenue Without Increasing Your Traffic)*
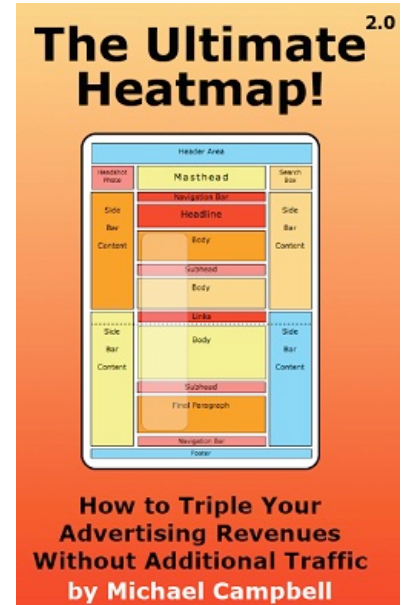
Test, Track, Tweak - And Repeat!

Before you start selling advertising space, or negotiating with sponsors, it only makes sense to know how well your ad space performs. Testing conversions by using your own ads (such as Adsense ad units or Affiliate banners) will allow you to negotiate better ad pricing based on various ad locations you've tested, with specific performance data.

Often you can earn more by monetizing your own ad space than you can by selling that space to a third party. The difference being that a sponsor or advertiser will usually pay you upfront for the space regardless of performance, while monetizing it yourself results in a delayed payment and/or longer term payoff.

If you want to make the absolute most out of every single element of your site, I highly recommend you read **The Ultimate Heat Map** as well as **Color Persuasion** by Michael Campbell. I paid $49.95 for both guides, and it was WELL worth it, but you can currently get them both for less than $20. See my review here. It's a small investment that will pay you back *over and again* if you implement the tested but (very) simple suggestions.

CrazyEgg: Easily Analyze Your Visitor's Actions

As I mentioned, traditional Heat Maps may not be be relevant to your unique site layout. I do "usability reviews" on a wide variety of site types & layouts every week, and it boils down to strategically placed site elements and the use of color to draw the visitors eye to specific places on your pages. Done right, you can lead the visitor to and through a desired path on your site.

Given the variety of WordPress themes and site layouts, as well as colors and site elements, you need a more advanced tool to accurately determine how your visitors are interacting with your individual pages.

In steps CrazyEgg. Instead of a generic Heat Map, this interactive tool allows you to track how your site visitors interact with your web pages and your site layout - specifically. Watch the video on CrazyEgg.com for details. *Note:* they offer a **Free Trial**. :)

Advertising Options: More Than Just Banner Ads!

When people think of selling advertising on their website the first thing that comes to mind is charging to display buttons or banners in the sidebar or footer, or some other designated (static) area of their website, for a monthly fee.

While this method of "banner advertising" is still an option, there are so many more ways you can work with advertisers and sponsors now. Many of them will be interested in getting directly in front of your readers, through your content and conversations.

If you talk to potential advertisers that are not aware of those options, or they contact you simply to run a banner ad on your site, you can easily "upsell them" on the added value of running an **interactive advertising campaign** with you.

This is where your "Total Reach" will come in handy - your email list, social channels, your connections, etc - and the time you've invested to engage and interact with your market. These assets can help you get a better response (and more sales) for your advertisers, which means you can charge more and/or keep them on board long-term.

You may recall my statement: *"If you have an audience, you can monetize it."* From the start I've encouraged you to engage your market, interact with your market and with the market leaders in your niche, and of course *serve* your market in everything you do.

You should look at advertisers and sponsors in the same way. Consider what you can do to serve them *(better)*. If you can deliver **results**, you'll get ad/campaign renewals and referrals (and testimonials!) which is the easiest way to increase your ad revenue. ;-)

There are no set rules about online advertising. You can get creative with what you offer, or negotiate a unique set of advertising & outreach options with more interesting advertisers. If you test certain things yourself, such as ad placement or certain types of offers, you'll be able to negotiate with advertisers/sponsors based on "what works".

While you can accept basic banner advertising, or sponsored blog posts - *as just two examples* - keep in mind that **your relationship with the advertiser doesn't have to end there.** You know what they say about customers. *It's far easier to sell to existing customers than it is to find and/or sell to new customers.* Your sponsors and advertisers are customers too, so keep this in mind. They may be very firm on exactly what they want in regards to advertising. Deliver that, and deliver it well, **then follow up with additional options** that will help them get *even more results* from your audience.

You don't necessarily have to publish every option you might offer publicly (on your site) but you should be prepared to negotiate those additional options with interested parties.

Your advertising options might include:

- Site-Wide Banner Advertising
- Sponsored Blog Post
- Featured Editorial
- Product Review
- Case Study
- Hosting a Contest / Drawing / Giveaway
- Dedicated Feature to your Email List
- Social Media Promotion

What you decide to offer will depend on the company, the product, your level of interest in the products/services/offer, and how much of a match it is for your target market.

Keep in mind that it's *your* site, *your* business, and you have complete control over what you accept and who you choose to work with - and how.

You can publish standard options and rates on your website, or include them in your Media Kit, but you should also encourage them to get in touch with you to discuss their specific goals - and even more options to interact with your engaged niche audience.

If it's a company you're already a big fan of, or a product you really love (and know your market would as well!), putting together a more involved advertising campaign makes good sense for everyone involved. If it's not of interest - you can simply say "thank you for your inquiry but this is not a good match for my audience" or "thank you for your inquiry but this is not a good fit for my editorial and advertising calendar at this time."

Sponsored Blog Post -vs- Featured Editorial

A "Sponsored Blog Post" often has very specific requirements with a very specific angle. I accept these through certain networks (which I'll share with you). A Featured Editorial is "content-based advertising" and different in that I offer to "talk about" (feature) their site/company/product to my readers, in my own voice and from my own perspective.

Product Review -vs- Case Study

A Product Review is a single post, where a Case Study is a (more valuable) series of posts *documenting the use* of a product/service, and *the results* from using that product.

You don't need to have every detail or advertising option figured out right now. It's best to consider each advertiser or sponsor _on a case-by-case basis_, and determine what you feel will serve them best - and also interest your readers most. Just keep in mind that:

"Everything Is Negotiable!"

Selling advertising is not just about making money. Done right, it's a great way to serve your market - and come up with interesting new content and offers for your readers. The **blog post below**, for example, is a Featured Editorial. The advertiser sponsored (paid for) my blog post about her website, which I (creatively) framed to be of specific interest to my readers. We also negotiated an exclusive and substantial discount code for my readers - which will improve her conversion and also make my readers happy!

Art _of_ Crafts

As part of your online marketing strategy, you should scout out the specialized niche directories in your market for both exposure and quality inbound links.

And if you're selling crafts online, you're in luck - because I've scored you an exclusive discount on advertising at the Art of Crafts Directory. ☺

Do people still search for directories? Absolutely. According to keyword research, even. It's also a great place to locate market leaders in your niche, and other bloggers you can work with to increase your reach even more.

You can find other blogs to interact with, affiliates for your products, places to submit guest blog posts or find guest bloggers, etc.

And of course by submitting your own site to the directory you can be found as well! Not only by potential partners, but also by your ideal clients and/or visitors.

> ℹ If you run a handmade/craft type of business online, you can get a sweet deal on advertising in a **Craft Directory**. The website is called _Art of Crafts_ and you can get 33% off any listing by using the "**LynnTerry33**" coupon code after you add the listing and before you submit payment.

Art of Craft is not just another crafts directory. Alison Wood is passionate about the topic and her fellow crafters, and also authors the related Art of Crafts Blog. She

What Should You Charge For Advertising?

This is one of the most common questions asked by website owners for the last ten years, and it's truly **a *loaded* question**. There are entirely too many variables for there to be a simple standard. Even more so now than ten years ago, for sure. *But don't fret.* I'm going to help you figure out what you should charge for advertising on your site. ;-)

Let's start with this formula shared by Yaro Starak (source), who has more than a decade of experience selling advertising on websites across a variety of niches:

> You can charge **X dollars per month**, per ad, with X being equal to your **daily visitors count divided by ten**.

He gives the example of 500 visitors a day, being "X", which would mean you can charge $50/month for a banner ad on your blog or website. I assume Yaro's formula is referring to "Unique Visitors" (vs total visits, which would include repeat visitors).

On my TravelingLowCarb.com blog, I get approximately 30,000 Unique Visitors a month on "slow months" (when I'm not *aggressively* blogging/promoting). With an average of about 1500 visitors a day, I should charge $150/month for a banner ad in a prime spot.

Then in that same article, Yaro mentions *"when you break milestone traffic numbers like 100,000+ Pageviews per month..."* which I found interesting. I see close to a quarter of a million (200,000+) Pageviews per month on TravelingLowCarb.com, but only around 30,000 Unique Visitors - when I'm not marketing aggressively, as I mentioned above.

[Sidebar] *Should I qualify that statement?* I think I should. :) My blog is not brand new. It's more than three years old. There are times that I'm sick, busy, traveling, or any other number of reasons that I might not be actively blogging or marketing my site "aggressively". Given the site age, I have lots of core content and good rankings that still get plenty of traffic when I'm in "maintenance mode". In maintenance mode I might blog less frequently, and may only update my social media channels once a day.

In contrast, normally I spend a minimum of one hour a day working on this niche site, and often 2-3 hours, which includes: blogging 5x a week, updating social channels several times a day & getting actively involved in groups & discussions around the web.

Obviously traffic increases exponentially with more content and activity. ;-)

Back to the topic of Ad Rates...

> You can charge **X dollars per month**, per ad, with X being equal to your **daily visitors count divided by ten**.

Using Yaro's formula, $150/month sounds okay for a simple banner or button ad in the sidebar on a blog like mine. So this is a good formula for you to use as a starting point.

But as I mentioned, there are many variables to consider and other options you can use to increase your advertising revenue and deepen your relationship with advertisers.

This formula *only* takes actual *site visitors* into account. It doesn't include the number of people on your email list, how many followers you have across your social media accounts, or in my case: the fact that I have an active niche Facebook Group with more than 17,000 members - or any other "assets" you may have in your niche.

Obviously a sitewide banner is only going to be seen by those people that actually visit your website. So for basic ad sales, or rates you publish publicly, this formula is fine.

This is where having an awesome Media Kit comes in handy!

The Ad Rate Formula doesn't take any factors into consideration other than the basic number of visitors to your site each day. Other factors might include your rapport with your readers or how actively engaged the visitors are on your site. These are points you really want to spotlight on your Media Kit, which will allow you to charge more than the standard ad rates. Including your comment ratio, reader & advertiser testimonials, social media stats, etc will increase the perceived value of advertising on your website.

Going The Extra Mile Brings In The Extra Dollar...

I like to introduce sponsors or products/services to my readers personally. It makes my readers feel "included" plus it's great for "transparency". Both of which make you look less like a sellout, and make your readers feel appreciated -and part of your community.

This also helps the advertiser get better results, of course. And *better results equal renewals and more interest in other advertising options*. So if I'm going to run a banner advertisement for a month (or more), I would prefer to write a blog post telling my readers about the company/offer/etc - and why I personally like & recommend it.

Tip: Combine Advertising Options To Increase The Amount Of The Sale

I charge $250 for a 500-word "Featured Editorial", which is a short blog post introducing my readers to a brand, product or company that I'm sure they'll enjoy. That's a GREAT deal because it's optimized, permanent, and goes out to my email list & social channels.

If an advertiser contacts me for a $150 banner ad for one month, I would respond with a counter offer to write a Featured Editorial (value $250) and also include the banner ad in a prime location on my site ($150) for only $300 total - saving them $100.

It only takes a few extra minutes to add the banner ad to my sidebar, and maybe an hour tops to write 500 words introducing them to my readers - but by doing so I've doubled the sale from $150 to $300. Obviously the advertiser will get A LOT more value out of this package deal than a banner ad alone! Especially considering they will ALSO be getting in front of my mailing list, Twitter followers, Google+ circles, Facebook Fans, and even my Facebook Group with over 17,000 members.

A great Media Kit will do most of the "selling" for you if you include these sales points that increase the value of advertising on your website. But you can easily negotiate advertising deals on a case-by-case basis, based on how excited you are to work with that advertiser and/or how well you think your market will respond.

Be Personable With Your Advertisers & Sponsors!
I typically respond to an advertising inquiry personally with something like:

"Hello ___, thanks for reaching out. I would absolutely love to work with you on your ad campaign! I'm a big fan of your ____ (or: I've been considering trying out your ___, or: this looks a great fit for my audience!) and I think my readers would really love to learn more about it as well. I assume you've seen my Media Kit? If not, you'll find it online at _link_ and I've also attached a PDF copy for your convenience.

The standard rate for a sitewide banner in the sidebar is $150/month, but as you can see I have a large and active social media reach as well as an email list - and I would love to get the word out about your offer to these people as well!"

Next I would include a brief offer (above example), spotlight the "value points", and let them know *I'm open to other ideas*. I would also state "We could get this live as early as Monday if you're ready to proceed." - and include my PayPal address or payment page.

*Always make them a **better** offer, that's too good to pass up, and <u>close</u> <u>that</u> <u>sale</u>! ;-)*

❋ The Pros & Cons of Automating Advertising Sales

There are various WordPress plugins and programs you can use to automate the sales of your advertising inventory. The upside to this is that the whole process is hands-off.

The downside is that you are <u>limited</u> to basic banner sales only.

You also miss the opportunity to work directly with the advertiser, forming more profitable (long term) relationships, and you also miss the chance to customize advertising campaigns for them for higher dollar value per sale.

Personally, I prefer to manage my advertising sales and sponsorships personally as it gives me complete editorial control, nothing "sneaks past me" and onto my site, and I can nurture (profitable) contacts and alliances with brands and companies in my niche.

While I have to also manually handle renewals and removals, this gives me a second point of (personable) contact with the advertiser where I can ask about their results, offer them other options, or discuss any other ideas I (or they) may have.

❋ Test Various Price Points & Options

List and highlight your "assets" in your Media Kit, and include a note that encourages potential advertisers to contact you to discuss advertising campaigns customized to their specific needs. Make sure your contact info immediately follows this call-to-action!

Do not underprice your advertising space/options. It's best to price high. You can always reduce, discount, run specials, or negotiate. If you start too low you won't have room to do this. And if your pricing is too low, a potential advertiser may pass based on perceived (low) value of advertising on your site.

Offer a discount on longer term "ad runs" such as quarterly or annual (vs monthly). This will encourage a bigger sale. You might include a bonus (such as a monthly social media feature to your channels) on quarterly or annual ad runs for additional incentive.

Test & tweak your ad pricing. Are your ad spots not selling? Lower the price or run a special. Is your ad space staying sold out? Increase your rates!

Every site/niche is different. Test various package deals at various price points until you figure out the pricing and options that work best on your site and in your niche.

How you choose to monetize your niche site is completely up to you of course, but it pays to weigh all of your options and test a variety of revenue sources. Here are some points to consider, and some additional tips as you get set up to start selling ads:

Populate Your Own Ad Space

Decide where you want to place advertisements on your site, *ideally based on the heat map and your own testing*, then fill that space yourself until it sells.

You don't want empty spaces, or multiple "See Your Ad Here!" graphics all over your site. This won't appeal to visitors OR advertisers.

Use a mix of Google Adsense (or other Ad Networks) and Affiliate Banners in your ad space to start.
Tip: add a link to your blog post or review below the affiliate banners to increase interest and sales. ;-)

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* See NEW HostGator Coupon Codes *

Sponsored Posts & Featured Editorials

Content-based advertising is very popular simply because *it works*. Note: If a blog post is sponsored, or you're an affiliate for the product, you must disclose this "relationship" to your readers within the post. I like to do this "conversationally" within the context of the post vs a dry generic disclaimer. Here's an example (see full post):

> *Joining their ad network will help increase your chances for Sponsorship opportunities too, so that's a great reason to use that once you join SocialSpark.*
>
> At any rate, I'm going to give you full disclosure here. They are currently running a contest for new referrals, and I would really like to win. I LOVE a good challenge! So if you have ever considered working with brands, or making more money with your blog, I would be *thrilled* if you **sign up** through my referral link today. ☺

I mentioned I charge $250 for a Featured Editorial. I explain that here.

Negotiate on Behalf of Your Readers

Want to win some serious brownie points with your readers? Negotiate exclusive deals, offers, or coupon codes with affiliate merchants and/or advertisers. This will improve conversions for you, and help them get more leads/customers too! If you deliver results, they'll keep advertising on your site and/or working with you. ;-) See Live Example

Above all else, focus on your content and community. Build a solid readership and an engaged following in your niche. With active audiences across various channels, and a good Media Kit, you'll attract the interest of great sponsors and advertisers.

While you can do some outreach to brands and potential sponsors yourself, you don't want to become a full time "Ad Manager" at the expense of content & community. Serving your market should always be your top priority, and the companies you work with should simply be an extension of that objective.

An ad is best served on a site where the publisher has a good relationship with their readers - or at least unique content and a strong readership - whether you place that ad for an advertiser, or as an affiliate.

With a strong focus on your content & community, your recommendations will convert well, and your advertisers and sponsors will get good value by working with you on their advertising & outreach campaigns.

Test, Test, Test!

Whether you monetize your site via advertising, Adsense, affiliate programs, or your own products/services it pays to constantly test & tweak for the best ($$) results. CrazyEgg has a free trial to use for testing, and you should study the extensive testing at [Heat Map & Color Psychology](#) for very simple changes that can make a huge impact on earnings.

Your Homework:

- Study the Resources & Examples Throughout This Module
- Update Your Media Kit with Adverting Options
- Create and Populate the Ad Space on Your Site
- Continue writing Optimized Content & stay active on Social Media

We'll continue this topic in Module 19 with even more resources, live examples and tips for *finding advertisers* and working with brands, as well as advertising networks... :-)

If you have questions about this week's tasks you can reach me on [Facebook](#) or at my [Forum](#). Otherwise I'll see you next week in Module 19. *cheers*

Have Questions?

If you have questions, join us on the ClickNewz Forum:

[Join the ClickNewz Forum](#)

You can also post questions for Lynn Terry on one of the following social networks:

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If you would like hands-on help brainstorming your business or setting up your website, contact Lynn at: [AskLynnTerry@gmail.com](#) to discuss low cost private or group coaching options.